



MATERIALISM AS A SOCIAL PLAGUE IN TUNJI OGUNDIMU'S *MOUNTAIN OF GOLD*

SIDI CHABI Moussa

Senior Lecturer of African Literature at the Department of Anglophone Studies

Faculty of Letters, Arts and Human Sciences

University of Parakou (UP), Parakou, Republic of BÉNIN

Email: sidichabi@yahoo.fr



Article Received: 08/11/2020

Article Accepted: 14/12/2020

Published online: 21/12/2020

DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.8.4.164](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.8.4.164)

Abstract

This article aims at examining critically and at exposing the factors responsible for materialism as a social plague in Tunji Ogundimu's *Mountain of Gold*. Nowadays, materialism has become a recurrent issue because most Africans, especially women, generally want to possess money and other material things at all costs. Hence the necessity to carry out this research work in order to find the ins and outs of this phenomenon so as to search for tentative solutions to it through the actions of Aisha, one of the female characters in the novel. The methodological approaches used in this paper are the phenomenological and descriptive approaches. The literary theory applied to it is Marxist criticism which is based on materialism versus spirituality in the framework of this research work. The study has found that materialism hinders the African society and needs to be eradicated. The focus of this research work is limited to a critical appraisal of the novel under study with illustrations. The paper recommends and concludes that materialism is a social plague which should be eradicated for the welfare of the African society.

Keywords: Materialism, social plague, women, money, material things.

Résumé

Cet article vise à examiner de manière critique et à exposer les facteurs responsables du matérialisme en tant que fléau social dans *Mountain of Gold* de Tunji Ogundimu. De nos jours, le matérialisme est devenu une question récurrente car la plupart des Africains, en particulier les femmes, veulent généralement posséder de l'argent et d'autres biens matériels à tout prix. D'où la nécessité de mener ce travail de recherche dans le but de trouver les tenants et les aboutissants de ce phénomène afin d'y chercher des approches de solutions à travers les actions d'Aisha, l'un des personnages féminins du roman. Les approches méthodologiques utilisées dans cet article sont les approches phénoménologiques et descriptives. La théorie littéraire qui lui est appliquée est la critique marxiste qui est basée sur le matérialisme contre la spiritualité dans le cadre de ce travail de recherche. L'étude a découvert que le matérialisme est un obstacle à la société africaine et qu'il doit être éradiqué. L'objectif de ce travail de recherche se limite à une évaluation critique du roman étudié avec des illustrations. Le document recommande et conclut que le matérialisme est un fléau social qui doit être éradiqué pour le bien-être de la société africaine.

Mots-clés : Matérialisme, fléau social, femmes, argent, biens matériels.

INTRODUCTION

Materialism is a social plague which seriously affects African societies. This study focuses on materialism and on how it can complicate life through Tunji Ogundimu's *Mountain of Gold*. Many men in couples or engagement complain about their wives or fiancées' being materialists. This phenomenon causes a lot of cases of divorce, but till now, people ignore why certain women are materialists and the consequences they run after. Hence the necessity to carry out this research work in order to find the ins and outs of this phenomenon so as to find tentative solutions to it. This study endeavours to analyse the phenomenon of materialism in society and to draw people's attention to this weighty and growing phenomenon, without forgetting the dangers that these women face later in life. The purpose of this research work is to examine critically and to expose the factors responsible for materialism as a social plague as it occurs in the novel under study. Another purpose of the study is to sensitise Africans on the necessity to avoid indulging in materialism which is harmful.

The theoretical framework of the research work is based on Marxist criticism which has to do with materialism versus spirituality. The methodological approaches used in this paper are the phenomenological and descriptive approaches through documentary research which includes internet sources and library sources. The pertinence of the theory and methods used lies in the fact that they induce not only an understanding of the theme under study, materialism, at large, but also a literary appraisal of materialism as a social plague through a study of the selected novel. The research work is articulated around three sections, namely definition of materialism, women as materialists, and dangers inherent in materialism.

1. Definition of Materialism

A. S. Hornby (1989, p. 768), defines 'materialism' as the "obsession with material possessions, bodily comforts, etc. while neglecting spiritual values" and a 'materialist' as a "person excessively interested in material things." K. M. Rassuli and S. C. Hollander (1986, p. 10, cited by M. L. Richins and S. Dawson, 1992, p. 304) describe

materialism as "a mind-set... an interest in getting and spending" and R. W. Belk (1984, p. 291) defines it as "the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions." "For some, possessions are essential to their lives and identities" (J. Gaines, 1990, cited by M. L. Richins and S. Dawson, 1992, p. 303).

"Recall that materialistic individuals are likely to harbor not only existential insecurity but also insecurity rooted in childhood development and, as a result, may have difficulty forming strong and meaningful interpersonal attachments" (T. Kasser et al., 1995; A. Rindfleisch et al., 1997, cited by A. Rindfleisch, J. E. Burroughs and N. Wong, 2009, p. 4).

According to M. L. Richins and S. Dawson (1992, p. 307), "Defining materialism as a value is consistent with the notion that materialism reflects the importance a person places on possessions and their acquisition as a necessary or desirable form of conduct to reach desired end states, including happiness." They define it as a "set of centrally held beliefs about the importance of possessions in one's life" (M. L. Richins and S. Dawson (1992, p. 308). On the other hand, M. L. Richins (1987, p. 355) finds that "More materialistic people are dissatisfied with their standard of living than less materialistic people." It means that materialistic people are often unsatisfied. They are never happy with their living conditions.

R. W. Belk (1983, p. 514) says that "materialism reflects the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possession. At the highest level of materialism, such possessions assume a central place in a person's life and are believed to provide the greatest sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in life." So, for R. W. Belk, being materialistic can make people happy or unhappy. He thinks that the possession of material things is not automatically synonymous with happiness. So, materialism may also be a social plague as it is the case in the novel under study.

2. Women as materialists

In *Mountain of Gold*, the novel under study, Aisha is the prototype of the materialistic individuals mentioned above. Possessions seem to be essential to her life and interpersonal attachment does not matter to her. She wants a costly wedding despite the

fact that her fiancé, Kóripé, is a simple driver who cannot afford such a wedding since he has no financial means. The quotation below illustrates this fact:

‘Okay, *oko iyàwó*. Let’s talk about our wedding now. We haven’t discussed it fully. The pregnancy is two months and my parents are impatient to know their in-laws.’

‘Don’t worry,’ Kóripé said. ‘I will see your parents later. But I think it is better if you start talking to them yourself. *Nikkah* is a very simple matter. I will bring two or three people with our Iman and that will be it.’

Aisha’s countenance changed suddenly. ‘You mean I will not have a proper wedding? What is that supposed to be? Did you pick me up from the gutters? Look, I want a good wedding. I don’t want a marriage that we shall begin to patch up from day one.’ (pp. 68-69)

The above quotation clearly shows that Aisha wants a costly marriage. She does not care whether her fiancé, Kóripé, has the money needed for such a marriage or not. What matters to her is a good wedding at all costs. Through her behaviour, the writer shows that it is not easy for poor men to get married with materialistic girls because they are too ambitious and awesome. This is further proved in the novel when she says: “[...]. There is a lot to gain from a good wedding. I am not a village girl” (p. 69). The theory applied to the study which is based on Marxist criticism is proved here. Its relevance lies in the fact that materialism is opposed to spirituality through Aisha’s behaviour. Aisha finds herself more important than other girls and wants people to know that she costs gold. Materialistic women or girls never know the meaning of real love. For them, love necessarily has to be shown through material possessions and physical comfort rather than spiritual values. The narrator reveals this through the following excerpt:

‘[...]. What will you gain from an elaborate wedding? You love me and I love you. That is what matters. A wedding is a mere ceremony. It is a show, an excuse to gather a crowd and give them food to feast on. I see it as a waste of resources, indeed, a waste of time. My love is real, it is a fact. And a fact is more than a

show. The ceremonial aspects should not be our worry; it should not overshadow the essence of marriage. Your heart beats for me; mine for you. That is okay.’ Aisha shook her head vehemently. ‘That is not okay.’ There is a lot of to gain from a good wedding. I have presented many a gift to many a couple. Shouldn’t I get something in return?’ I know what a good wedding is; I cannot leave my parents like an orphan in distress. If that’s the kind of thing you want; won’t you rather kidnap me? Anyhow, I will not be taken away from my parents as if you were hiring a house maid. (pp. 69-70)

The foregoing excerpt unveils the fact that for Aisha, getting material things is very important and constitutes one of the major reasons for a wedding. Her relationship with Kóripé does not matter to her. E. Fromm and M. Schudson’s assertion about materialistic people in the following quotation fits her well: “Materialistic people value acquisition and the means to acquire possessions more highly than those low in materialism. They also value possessions and their acquisition more than other life goals and more than their relationships with other people” (E. Fromm, 1976; M. Schudson, 1984, cited by M. L. Richins and S. Dawson, 1992, p. 308). As Aisha does not want a simple wedding, she fails to understand what her fiancé tells her. The following quotation proves this fact:

‘Say Kóripé. Do you believe that those who spend fortunes on their weddings are fools? Do you think they don’t know what they are doing? Or would you say that they don’t love each other?’

‘Listen to me, Aisha. I have said many times that I am a driver, not a Chief Executive; and I have a wife at home.’

‘We both knew this, didn’t we? But a wedding takes place once in a lifetime. I don’t want to miss mine. I am not Bushi. Let the world see that you love me, if you really do.’

‘Well, I still think that there is more to a marriage than the wedding ceremony...’

‘*Na grammar you wan’ knack. Me I wan’ wedding. And nothin’ go change am.*’ (p. 70)

The quotation reveals that despite Kóripé's explanation, Aisha does not want to understand him and remains stuck to her decision. This unveils the fact that as a materialistic girl, she is selfish and pretentious. Through her behaviour, the novelist intends to show that girls like her are stubborn profiteers who seek only their welfare rather than facing facts. She categorically rejects the alternative solution that her fiancé finds to help her have money by herself through petty business. She simply wants to live like a parasite, totally at Kóripé's expense. She thinks that she is not the kind of girl who would sell vegetables. The conversation below is an illustration of this sad fact:

'[...] things are not easy with the current economic situation. [...]. Since Bushi is established in her *fùfù* business I suggest you begin to sell pepper and tomatoes.'

Aisha jumped to her feet in anger. She hissed. *'Wetin be that? I be Bushi sister? Na you go sell pepper. You go sell tomato. And you go sell pònmó!'*

'Sit down,' Kóripé said calmly, 'Maybe you don't understand what I mean. There is nothing wrong in selling vegetables. Anything food is good business; it is money.'

'Which kin' money? Ten naira pepper, ten naira tomato; na that be business?'

'You have to start somewhere and I believe that selling vegetables is a good start.' (pp. 71-72)

The above conversation shows that Aisha wants to have money and other material things without doing petty business which other girls of her age do. She categorically rejects her fiancé's suggestion that she should sell pepper and tomatoes. Through this attitude, the novelist intends to show that materialistic girls always feel that they are beyond petty business. This justifies the fact that the priority for materialists is the acquisition of material things. Although they do not know how to create wealthy and good conditions for the acquisition of these things, they want to enjoy them at all costs. Aisha exemplifies this when she refuses to sell pepper and tomatoes in order to become financially independent like Bushi, his wife.

Many parents spoil their children with money from a tender age so much so that they find everything insufficient. Such children always complain because of their childhood which their parents have mismanaged. Despite the fact that they are teenagers, they already know the importance of material possessions and consider them as the sine qua non of social success. This situation may be due to their parents' behaviour and to the education that they have given them through the acquisition of material possessions. So, M. L. Richins and S. Dawson (1992, p. 304) are right when they say: "Materialists place possessions and their acquisition at the center of their lives." Despite Kóripé's advice that Aisha should do something to earn her living like his wife, she refuses because of her materialism. The narrator confirms this fact in the following excerpt:

'[...] Unfortunately, you have no school result and you haven't learned a trade. I can only suggest what I feel should suit your condition.' *'My condition? Which condition? I be blind, abi I be cripple? Did all the people who own big shops go to school? Do they have results? And those who sell expensive lace materials at Oshun Plaza; do they have results? Are they with two heads? Did you open a shop for me and I could not control it?'* (p. 73)

The above-mentioned excerpt reveals that Aisha does not want to do a business that is in accordance with her low level of education. She wants a costly business before starting something although she has a low level of education. She cannot hold a conversation without resorting to pidgin English, which testifies that she really has a low level of education. She wants a big shop, where she will sell expensive materials. She wants to grow overnight as it is always the case of materialist girls or women. In other words, she wants a 'mountain of gold' as revealed in the title of the novel. Once more, the theory which is based on Marxist criticism is proved. Its relevance lies in the fact that materialism is strongly opposed to spirituality through Aisha's behaviour. Her seeming predicament leads her to object to her marriage with Kóripé although she is pregnant. She laments that she is not prepared for marriage in this quotation:

'[...] A girl should not marry if she is not prepared. I am not prepared and I will not marry. Or did you provide anything to prepare me for marriage? I have nothing to show for a three months' relationship. Except for this unfortunate pregnancy. I am not a sex object. Your sweet talk is not powerful enough to tie me to a foolish relationship.' (p. 86)

The quotation reveals that Aisha wants Kóripé to provide something to prepare her for marriage after a three months' relationship. She even thinks that their relationship is a foolish one although she is pregnant. Through her attitude, the novelist intends to show that girls who take interest in material things cannot accept poor suitors. Aisha utterly tells Kóripé that she will not be proud to be driver's wife, especially a driver who has no financial muscle like him. She makes it clear in this quotation: "Don't cajole me, *Ònìgbèni*. You may feel proud if you marry anyone. But I will not be proud as a driver's wife; I mean a driver who has no financial muscle" (p. 87). Through the quotation, it is noticeable that Aisha insults and rejects her fiancé, Kóripé, simply because he is a poor driver. This behaviour proves that she has not received a good basic education at home. She further shows that she is a materialistic girl whose sole interest lies in getting a rich suitor. The following excerpt is an illustration:

'There is no accident in this matter. Simply put, you don't know what you want and you didn't go for your type of girl. You did not check your pocket before you went randy. *Onìgbèsè!*'
'*Kai!*' Kóripé exclaimed, shocked to a standstill. Nobody had ever called him *Onìgbèsè*.
What did he buy on credit from Aisha? [...].
'Well,' said Kóripé, 'we have to resolve the main thing between us. Only then I shall quit. I will wait to see my baby.' (pp. 87-88)

The excerpt clearly shows that Aisha sees her lover as someone who does not know the type of girl she is – a materialistic girl. She thinks that he has not gone for the type of girl that he can handle. She calls him names – *Onìgbèsè* which means debtor – because she sees love in terms of materialism. However, a well-educated girl cannot insult her fiancé

whatever his social status. This proves that she really lacks a good basic education which her parents have failed to give her at home.

While rejecting Kóripé because he is poor, Aisha seems to forget that nobody chooses to be poor in life; but sometimes, circumstances oblige people to be so. Poverty has many effects on people's lives and even determines their personality. One of the reasons why most girls are materialists today is the lack of financial means. They are unable to meet their basic needs because of poverty. For this reason, they are ready to do everything to get material things to avoid being ridiculous in society. So, the acquisition of material things becomes their priority and they are ready to do anything to have them. P. White (2014, p. 36) corroborates the idea when he argues: "Pope John Paul II warned about a dangerous mindset, widespread then, as now which placed too great an emphasis on material considerations and also distorted and obscured the proper hierarchy of human goods." Through this quotation, it appears that when people are too attached to material things, they destroy society and Man.

Girls who come from poor families are the most exposed to the phenomenon of materialism. Having the desire to possess certain material things but not having the financial capacity to afford them leads some girls to indulge in materialism. They become materialists overnight because all their choices and actions are based on material things that they cannot naturally possess. Rich men often objectify these poor girls because when they realise that they do not have financial means, they offer them money and other material things and handle them as they wish. Poor girls scarcely resist this temptation because poverty obliges them to accept everything. They sometimes execute the will of these rich men against their own will because they need money to solve their financial problems. For instance, Aisha has become a materialistic girl overnight because she comes from a poor family. This quotation reveals that fact:

When Aisha's sister, Moréniké, was preparing for her graduation, the sewing mistress insisted that the trainee should purchase all necessary working tools, including a sewing

machine, before the graduation could take place. Moréniké had learned fashion designing in a local sewing mistress's shop. The Bángbálás had raised 25,000 naira; ten thousand naira less than the needed amount. Aisha explained her family's predicament. Kóripé went and borrowed 5,000 naira each from Yellow and Sunday to make up the rest. He was yet to repay the two loans. (p. 93)

The aforementioned quotation shows that Aisha's father is not capable of affording the graduation fees of Moréniké, her younger sister. As a result, she pushes Kóripé to go and borrow 5,000 naira by explaining her family's predicament to him. This situation is a clear indication that Aisha comes from a poor family, which confirms the fact that she is a materialistic girl. Worst still, Kóripé is due to repay the two loans which make 35,000 naira in total. The following quotation reveals this fact: "He was yet to repay the two loans. In all, what he harvested from the relationship with Aisha was shame, shock, sorrow and embarrassment" (p. 93). So, he is bound to repay the two loans. The writer uses this situation to show that men sometimes become heavily indebted simply because girls cause them to get into debt.

Kóripé finds it difficult to get out of the debt he has contracted even though it does not directly concern his fiancée, Aisha. The novelist thus shows how materialistic girls' families may lead men in debt. Anyway, a materialistic girl's family may be materialistic like herself since she has been brought up in it. The theory applied to the study is proved here, and its relevance lies in the fact that materialism as a social plague is explicitly expressed and valorised at this level through an analysis of the content of the novel under study. Kóripé's predicament is solely related to the explicit materialism shown by Aisha and her family members. Poverty is at the origin of the situation which has led Kóripé to contract a loan in order to satisfy the financial needs of his fiancée's family. Bushi, his wife, rightly laments:

'There is something I don't understand though.' [...]. 'Why are you not contended? Why do you chase another girl when you have me at your beck and call? And why should you

borrow money and give it to Aisha's sister? Will you call it being generous? Can someone claim to be generous using other people's money? If Morenike should graduate, let her parents foot the bill. It is absolutely awful to give out what you don't have; and you were doing so when your own children needed help.' (pp. 98-99)

Through what Bushi has said in the above excerpt, it is evident that Kóripé does not fend for his family but has the cheek to borrow money to solve a problem which does not concern him. He thus appears as a careless father whose sole intention is to run after materialistic girls like Aisha while his own children cannot receive any formal education. Although he is a driver, his vision and priority should be his children's education. He should be willing to help them go far in their studies so as to get well-paid jobs in the future. However, their schooling constitutes the least of his worries. What Bushi has revealed in this quotation is very telling:

'You have not been learning from our experience. Our eldest child has been made an apprentice electrician. His kid brother is about getting apprenticed to a carpenter. Is there anything exciting about that? Is that the kind of life you want for your children? Wouldn't the bukkys of this world treat your children worse than they did you?' (p. 99)

Kóripé's children's predicament as unveiled in the foregoing quotation shows that their father does not take care of them. Instead of borrowing money for their education, he prefers to do so for other people's progress. The fact that his two sons are about to become handicraft workers does not preoccupy him. Through the quotation, the writer shows how some parents may be insensitive to the point of sacrificing their children's wellbeing. The situation in which Kóripé finds himself is due to the fact that Aisha, his materialistic lover, has led him astray. Apart from her own materialistic needs, she makes him fend for her sister and by extension for her parents. He appears as an insensible father who needs to become sensible as stipulated in the song that Tóbi, one of his sons has sung in Yoruba on his

mother's request. The song as translated into English in the novel reads:

Vehicle owner, be sensible
Vehicle owner, be sensible
It is not good for you to suffer
And for your children to carry it over
Vehicle owner, be sensible. (pp. 100)

Through the excerpt, the child is inviting his father to be sensible. The novelist uses this to show how children are sensible to their parents' misdeeds. He also reveals the fact that children may seek to right everything when they become fed up with their parents' misdeeds. The song has yielded a happy outcome insofar as it seems to have touched Kóripé on a tender spot. As a result, he seems to be willing to change for the good of his family. His attitude in the following quotation is an indication that he is willing to change: "[...] 'Everything will be all right. *Ihdinas sirotal mustekeem*. God will guide us in the right path'" (p. 101). His prayer shows that he is willing to change probably because he has come to the conclusion that materialistic girls like Aisha may cause his ruin.

Poverty is a phenomenon that most people are managing to escape worldwide. So, nobody wants to be or to remain poor for life, and everybody is fighting to eradicate poverty. This is the case of poor women and girls who run after wealth at all costs because poverty has caused them to become materialists. Materialistic girls no longer live freely like other girls. So, because they are obsessed by material possessions, they lose their sense of nobility. They believe that happiness is solely linked with the acquisition of material things. Aisha exemplifies this fact, as her fiancé, Kóripé, complains about her behaviour to his boss Agbadjé in these terms: "She doesn't want to sell vegetables. She feels I should borrow money to open a shop for her. Can a driver afford that?" (p. 82). In the quotation, Kóripé makes it clear that as a driver, he cannot afford to borrow money to open a shop to Aisha. He is fed up with all the problems that she heaps on him and wants to have advice from his boss. Money is one of the characteristics of materialism, and materialistic people always want to get more money as the narrator puts it in this quotation:

Kóripé joined Sunday and Yellow who were discussing Sunday's wife.

'You can't blame your wife,' he caught Yellow telling Sunday.

'But she keeps asking more money.'

'Does she know how much you earn per month?'

'Of course, I told her,' Sunday said. 'Twenty-nine thousand Naira.' (pp. 38-39)

In the foregoing quotation, the writer shows that the wife of a character called Sunday is a materialistic woman who is so much addicted to money. This fact is often noticed in most couples nowadays. It is not rare to hear men's complaint about their wives or girlfriends who disturb them excessively because of money. This situation is due to materialism which includes the exaggerated ambition to acquire material possessions. So, B. Russell (1984, p. 291) is right when he defines materialism as "the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions" and adds: "At the highest levels of materialism, such possessions assume a central place in a person's life and are believed to provide the greatest sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in life" (B. Russell, 1984, p. 291). This author's definition is relevant because nowadays, some women capitalise on material possessions to plan their lives and to make all kinds of choice in society. That is why people frequently qualify certain women or girls as materialists because they are so attached to material things. So, 'materialism' and 'women' have become two up-to-date words insofar as an important part of social problems come from materialism and women. For instance, it is the source of many cases of divorce and other love relationship problems.

3. Dangers Inherent in Materialism

Kidnapping and death are dangers inherent in materialism. Kidnapping becomes common in the world, especially in cities. It is due to different reasons which people are not entirely aware of. It may lead to the death of certain victims who are often children and women, especially young girls. J. C. Ngwama (2014, p. 134) gives further clarification about the term as follows:

Kidnapping can be seen as false imprisonment in the sense that it involves the illegal

confinement of an individual against his or her own will by another individual in such a way as to violate the confined individual's right to be free from the restraint of movement. This involves taking away a person against the person's will, usually to hold the person in false imprisonment or confinement without legal authority.

Through J. C. Ngwama's words in the quotation, it appears that kidnapping is an illegal phenomenon which makes life difficult for victims. People may suffer in this illegal confinement. Kidnappers may easily capture materialistic girls because they stupidly follow material things as ants run after sugar. This can be deduced through this quotation: "I met Aisha for the first time in the rain. She was short, stylish, beautiful. I was alone in Oga's car. She wanted a cab or so. She flagged me down. I stopped and gave her a lift. She took my number [...]" (p. 66). Through what Kóripé has said in the quotation, it is clear that he could have kidnapped Aisha because she has accepted the lift that he has offered her without knowing his real intentions. Fortunately, he has good intentions towards her. Great is the reader's surprise when she says:

'[...]. My eyes deceived me. That is just it. I thought I had met a man who could make me happy. I did not consider that someone own a beautiful car and someone else was driving it. Now I know the difference. I know what the market place looks like after the market day. It is a big empty space [...].' (p. 86)

The above-mentioned excerpt reveals that the first day Aisha has seen Kóripé driving his boss's pretty car, she thought it was his. As a result, she asks him to give her a lift without measuring the consequences that her act could have entailed. Thinking that Kóripé is the owner of the car, she seduces him and takes his phone number. So, if he was a kidnapper, he could have easily kidnapped her as soon as she gets on the car. This is an indication that Aisha is really a materialistic girl who does not care much about her own life. She is lucky that Kóripé is not an immoral man. If not, what she has done could have led her to death. Through her behaviour, the novelist intends to show the extent to which

materialism may be harmful for girls who indulge in it. When she discovers that Kóripé is not the rich man she thought he was, she becomes arrogant. This sad fact is revealed in the following conversation:

'You have to quit wasting my time,' Aisha snapped.

'How can I quit when you are carrying my baby?' Kóripé quipped.

'You don't know how? I will tell you. You cannot organize a wedding; and you just will not. You cannot set someone up in business. You cannot even pretend that you wish to do something tangible. And you want a wife? I am not a pick-up. Don't think that I am one simply because you gave me a lift.' (p. 86)

The conversation clearly shows that Aisha is thoroughly materialistic. Although she is pregnant, she abides by her obsession about a wedding and regrets the fact that Kóripé cannot meet her requirements. Her dignity does not matter to her because she is blinded by materialism. She wants to have financial success without suffering. As a result, she accuses Kóripé, a mere driver, of not being able to set her up in business. So, T. Kasser and R. M. Ryan (1993, cited by J. E. Burroughs and A. Rindfleisch, 2002, p. 350) seem to be right when they write:

[...] materialism (i.e., financial success aspiration) is an extrinsic goal that is less effective than intrinsic goals such as affiliation and community feeling in promoting individual well-being. In support of their conceptualization, they find that individuals who aspire to financial success have lower levels of self-actualization, vitality, and global functioning and higher levels of anxiety, depression, and behavioral disorders than individuals who aspire to more intrinsic goals.

The quotation illustrates Aisha's bad behaviour. She is dominated by acquisitiveness and self-centeredness which go along with materialism. M. L. Richins and S. Dawson (1992, p. 308) corroborate the idea when they say: "Materialistic people are self-centered. Many have noted that an overemphasis on material possessions results in selfishness [...]."

Spinsterhood is another danger inherent in materialism. According to A. S. Hornby (1989, p. 1233), 'spinsterhood' is the "state of being a spinster" and a 'spinster' is an "unmarried woman or a woman who remains single after the usual age for marrying" (pp. 1232-1233). It is generally noticed that materialistic girls or women have difficulties in getting married. They may not marry for a variety of reasons including personal inclination. For instance, they may become spinsters because they do not like to be submissive women at home. In the novel, Aisha seems to have an inclination for spinsterhood through her attitude. The following excerpt is an illustration of this fact:

Aisha reminded him how much time he spent trying to persuade her; and how long it took her to agree to marry him. He should know and let Bushi know that she was not coming to submit herself as house girl or play second fiddle. Above all, selling vegetables was not part of her agenda. If the suggestion was Bushi's idea he should go back and let her know that such will never be the lot of Aisha, the daughter of the Bàngbàlàs. (p. 74)

The foregoing excerpt clearly shows that Aisha may end up in spinsterhood. She is not ready to submit herself as a house girl or play second fiddle although she knows well that her fiancé already has a wife. Through her attitude, the novelist intends to lament the fact that materialistic girls or women are selfish and just want to submit themselves to material possessions rather than to men. Such females do not know true love insofar as they follow wealthy people who do not really love them in most cases. As a consequence, after sleeping with them exaggeratedly, such people leave them in distress. Since they love material things, some men offer them money and sleep with them. As a result, other men do not feel like marrying them because they consider them as prostitutes or whores. On the other hand, while decent housewives willingly accept to be controlled by their husbands, materialistic women love total freedom and do not like to be controlled by any man. G. Sutherland (2015, p. 33) evokes an American writer and spinster who declares: "Liberty is a better husband than love to many of us." So, she opts to stay single rather than getting married

because she does not want anyone to control her. She equates marriage with the deprivation of freedom.

Another factor is that materialistic girls or women do not give the chance to poor men to be their husbands. Aisha exemplifies this sad fact in the novel as she laments: "But I will not be proud as a driver's wife; I mean a driver who has no financial muscle" (p. 87). So, she is looking for a rich man before getting married. Many girls hope to marry someone who is rich until the normal age of marriage exceeds; consequently, they get old and become spinsters. They sink into spinsterhood because of the social plague which affects them – materialism. Aisha's parents have failed to instill the preservation of dignity into her. So, the standards they have instilled into her are purely materialistic. They have thus failed to play the prime role that parents normally play in their children's lives. The narrator pinpoints this through Kóripé's character who explains to his boss that he is an honest man in these terms:

'[...]. Many people don't understand many things about me. In a way, I am like my father. Our father was a bicycle repairer. But he used to drum into us the importance of being an Omolúwàbí.'

'According to him, you don't have to be a moneybags [sic] to be an Omolúwàbí. He says an Omolúwàbí does not lie. He does not steal. He is reasonable. He has ambition but recognises his limitations. He works hard but does not try to be rich overnight. In all, he will not be desperate in pursuit of a car and get run over by a bicycle.' (p. 84)

The above-mentioned quotation shows that Kóripé still remembers everything that his father taught him when he was a child. As a good father, he has taught his son how to be a righteous person. While advising his son to have ambition but to recognise his limitations, he incites him to avoid indulging in materialism. Hence, the role of parents is very important for their children's good basic education and future. So, Aisha's attitude which is quite the contrary of what is considered as the norm may lead her to spinsterhood.

Knowing that a married woman should not take anything from another man, some materialistic girls prefer not to get married. Likewise, because of their immoral behaviour, many bad testimonies stain their personal lives and men flee from them. For instance, in *Mountain of Gold*, Aisha has aborted her pregnancy because her fiancé, Kóripé, is a poor man and is not able to provide her with material possessions. The excerpt below is an illustration:

'[...] Yesterday, I took Oga's wife to Labaiwa hospital to see her Doctor. I was surprised to see Aisha come out of the female ward, dragging her feet. When I asked what was wrong, she said she had typhoid fever. I wanted to know why she did not call me; she said it was an emergency and, anyway, the money I gave her for the antenatal registration was handy. So, she didn't need to call.'

'However, when I checked on her at home around eleven this morning, she told me a different story. She had aborted the pregnancy. Just imagine yourself in my shoes! Would you believe it? What would you say? She spent my money to kill my baby.' (p. 90)

The aforementioned excerpt unveils the fact that Aisha is not interested in having children with a poor man like Kóripé. Her sole interest lies in the material possessions that she can derive from a love relationship. The writer uses this to show that some girls are interested in material possessions rather than in getting married and bearing children to poor men. In addition, he denounces materialistic girls who resort to abortion which is a crime. Aisha's abortion has hurt Kóripé so much so that he decides to go and tell his friends and even his wife about it. While indulging in abortion, Aisha forgets that in the future, when another man would feel like marrying her, people may tell him what she has done to Kóripé and thus spoil her love affair with her new lover. So, because of her misadventure with Kóripé, she may remain single until her death.

Commenting on spinsters, T. Franzen (1996, p. 23) argues: "Their stories suggest a far more materialistic evaluation of the importance of their early years on their later choices." The quotation clearly shows that the past of a materialistic woman

may constitute a handicap for her wellbeing in the future. So, some women are spinsters because of their past life of debauchery. Moreover, expensive and excessive dowries are the preoccupation of materialistic girls. They always want to make fortune from weddings and impose many expensive things for the dowry. It is one of the major reasons why they remain single or become spinsters. Spinsterhood can lead to suffering from loneliness, depression and other diseases, and psychological obsessions. Aisha is the prototype of such girls since she wants a costly wedding which she can never have with her fiancé. She may lapse in the diseases listed above in the long run if she becomes a spinster.

Prostitution and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) are other dangers inherent in materialism which involves girls' trading sex for benefit. As materialists, they are ready to make love with men for money and other material things. Sex, according to them, is considered as a means to acquire wealth. As a result, they become sex addicts and are able to have sexual intercourses from morning to evening. They do not necessarily act for pleasure but for money and other material things that they can derive from the bargain. I. Neubauer (2016, p. 163) argue about the sex trade of materialistic girls in these terms:

Given the connection between gifts and sexual relations, it is difficult [...] to clearly distinguish prostitution [...] and identifying prostitutes is made more difficult because [...] many women take advantage of local conditions, such as engaging in sexual intercourse with the hope of receiving material payment in some form, and refer to such behavior, among others, as prostitution. Although such behavior is not synonymous with entrepreneurial activity, my informants sometimes referred to this as prostitution, particularly when they wanted to draw attention to the negative connotation associated with such behavior. At the same time the professional exchange of sex for money is fully defined as prostitution.

Through the above quotation, I. Neubauer shows that materialistic girls indulge in prostitution with the hope of receiving material payment in some

form. In most cases, their favourite places of prostitution are cities. This may be due to the large number of people in cities where they are likely to have a lot of victims. Although Aisha tells her fiancé that she is 'not a sex object' (p. 86), it is clear that she may become a sex object in the long run. Materialistic girls are always ready to have sexual intercourses to safeguard their interests. They often give themselves up to elderly men who offer them material things in return for the favours. T. M. Lutya (2012, p. 103) corroborates this idea when they posit:

They become intimately involved with older men who can purchase the wares the teenager wants in return for sex favours. The male companion may then persuade the young female to perform sex work in order to generate more money. Eventually, the female companion is moved, harboured and commercially exploited for the benefit of the male companion.

In the above-mentioned quotation, T. M. Lutya demonstrates how materialistic girls prostitute themselves and the way older men behave towards them. Through this quotation, it is clear that there is no marriage contract between these materialistic girls and such men. So, they just sell their sexual intimacy by willingly accepting to sleep with men in return for material payment. While indulging in prostitution, materialistic girls expose themselves to great risks insofar as they may catch Sexually Transmitted Diseases. So, some men may offer them large sums in order to make love with them without protection. Surprisingly, because of money, they accept to sleep with these men, thus forgetting that such an act may lead them to catch Sexually Transmitted Diseases like AIDS. Materialistic girls endanger their lives because they want to get wealthy overnight. The narrator of *Mountain of Gold* laments Aisha's case through Kóripé's character as follows: "She wants to be rich overnight because she wants to marry a government worker. Bushi has never given me this kind of headache" (p. 82).

Apart from Sexually Transmitted Diseases, the risks of prostitution include domestic violence, physical assault, and psychological sequelae of these traumatic stressors: posttraumatic stress disorder,

dissociative disorder, eating disorder, and depression. On the other hand, prostitution obliges materialistic girls or women to use certain medications which may have side effects. They use these medications to be strong during sexual intercourses so as to satisfy their customers. In addition, these girls take drugs to prevent pregnancies. Once they inadvertently get pregnant, they indulge in the phenomenon of abortion. It is the case of Aisha who has aborted the pregnancy which Kóripé is responsible for in the novel. The narrator refers to her pregnancy and abortion in these terms:

It was equally obvious that Aisha was inhabited by a devilish spirit. She was two-month pregnant. She had informed him herself. And he had seen and recognized all the signs on her. He was excited. Having a baby was always a good thing; a divine and inspiring source of joy. Now that was not to be. Without consulting him, without obtaining his approval, even without the smallest hint, she had gone ahead and terminated the pregnancy. She had killed the baby. (p. 94)

The above excerpt reveals that Aisha is an abnormal girl because a normal girl cannot behave as she does. She has opted to abort her two-month pregnancy without any sound reason. She has resorted to abortion simply because she is too materialistic. The novelist uses this abortion to show how materialism can lead girls to extreme acts. He also denounces the fact that materialistic girls easily do what normal girls cannot do. They do not fear abortion which may lead them to death. Kóripé's approval is necessary before the abortion since he is responsible for the pregnancy. However, Aisha has opted to terminate it without his consent. The following quotation reveals this fact: "Did she think that she made herself pregnant? How could she alone assume the responsibility of taking the baby's life? Well, maybe she sensed that he would never give a deadly approval, if she had sought it" (p. 94). So, she has acted alone in the termination of the pregnancy because of materialism. Her risk of prostitution becomes clear insofar as the abortion has taken place "[...] in the presence of a rascally-looking young man with earrings seated and sipping a foul-smelling beer" (p. 94) who is probably her new lover although there

is no evidence in the novel. Bushi, Kóripé's wife, seems to be right when she tells her husband: "You believe that everything that glitters is gold' [...] 'It is not sad,' [...]. 'The whole venture is foolish'" (p. 98). So, as someone has said, "[...] Aisha's departure is good riddance" (p. 98).

Imprisonment is another danger inherent in materialism. A. S. Hornby (1989, p. 625) defines 'imprisonment' as the "state of being imprisoned" and the verb 'imprison' as "put or keep somebody in or as if in prison." Materialistic girls or women are often imprisoned because of theft as they want wealth at all costs. They often collaborate with gangs to steal and join swindling groups to defraud people. Their favourite technique is to feign love with rich men in order to be able to defraud them. They indulge in such vices because they want to get rich overnight and consequently end up in prison. This justifies the fact that prisons are generally full of female criminals in some countries. T. Atabay (2014, p. 3) corroborates this fact in the quotation below:

Women continue to constitute a very small proportion of the general prison population worldwide. However, not only are their numbers increasing in tandem with the rise in the overall prison population in many countries, but studies in some countries have shown that the number of female prisoners is increasing at a faster rate than that of male prisoners.

The above quotation shows how women give themselves up to illegal phenomena in the world. So, because they want to acquire material possessions at all costs, they are ready to do illegal things. Originally, society has more confidence in women than in men. They are often considered as being physically and mentally weaker than men. As such, people do not expect them to indulge in illegal deeds. However, materialistic women who are fond of material things do immoral and illegal things. For instance, some private services prefer appointing women at certain strategic posts. Unfortunately, materialistic women may take advantage of these opportunities to commit unlawful acts such as swindling and embezzlement. The narrator deplores this fact in this conversation:

'[...] Here, the rich fence themselves off. Many of them even ignore pestering beggars. They steal and amass our money to start a business or to construct an industry. That is bad enough. They claim that they want to provide jobs.'

'Now what you say is that elsewhere, other wealthy people give out leftovers from their meals. And you think it is better? To speak the truth, what good does that do to the poor man? None; he can still not have two meals a day; and he is not sure what he will eat tomorrow. Does that look like decent life?' (p. 81)

Through the foregoing conversation, the novelist shows that he is against materialistic leaders' ways of doing things. He denounces the fact that they care about filling their own pockets rather than caring about the welfare of the poor. Their priority is to steal people's money and to get a lot of material things. The materialism of these leaders constitutes a handicap for the development of their countries, but they sooner or later end up in prison. All this shows that materialism is something harmful for society. *Mountain of Gold* deals with the theme of 'materialism' probably because its author has noticed that the phenomenon is gaining momentum and thinks that dealing with it may affect people morally and correct certain imperfections in society.

The important number of women prisoners today may be explained by the fact that there are materialistic women who frequently violate the established laws. When a mother is imprisoned, her family often breaks up and her children end up in state care institutions or alternative care. C. Kruttschnit and R. Gartner (2003, p. 1) argue about women's imprisonment in these terms:

Incarceration of women [...] is at a historic high, but understanding of women's experiences in prison, their responses to treatment, their lives after prison, and how changing prison regimes have affected these things remains limited. Individual attributes, prison experiences, and prison conditions are associated with how women respond to

incarceration, but assessments of their joint and conditional influences are lacking.

The two authors describe women's living conditions in prison in the quotation. Through what they have said, it is clear that prison is not a cool place to live in and that it is more painful for females. This is the fate awaiting materialistic women. However, such a situation may not occur if they avoid indulging in materialism. Religion may be a powerful weapon against this social plague. As R. W. Belk (1985, p. 265) puts it, "even all major religions include some exhortation for followers to forgo earthly pleasures for the sake of rewards in the life hereafter." It means that religions exhort followers to avoid indulging in materialism as a social plague which may impede genuine worshipping. According to M. L. Richins and S. Dawson (1992, p. 304), "Many religious and social critics have condemned materialism as inherently bad." So, although materialism may have positive aspects for those who sell the goods that materialists need, it is inherently bad as revealed in the quotation.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research work has been to examine critically and to expose the factors responsible for materialism as a social plague as it occurs in the novel under study. Another purpose of the study has been to sensitise Africans on the necessity to avoid indulging in materialism. The paper has dealt with three sections, namely the definition of materialism, women as materialists, and the dangers inherent in materialism. The novelist has used many literary techniques, including the use of pidgin English, Yoruba words and songs, to convey his message. He has succeeded in impacting his readership by drawing his readers' attention to the dangers inherent in materialism insofar as it has a lot of drawbacks. He has shown that materialism mainly affects females. The findings of the study clearly show that materialism exposes people in general, and women or girls in particular, to a lot of dangers. It is a social plague which needs to be eradicated because it is very harmful to society.

Works cited

[1]. ATABAY Tomris, 2014, Handbook on women and imprisonment (Second edition), UNDOC

Criminal Justice Handbook Series. Vienna, Austria: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 162 p.

- [2]. BELK Russell W., 1983, "Worldly Possessions: Issues and Criticisms," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 10, Richard P. Bagozzi and Alice M. Tybout (Eds.), Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Consumer Research, pp. 514-519.
- [3]. BELK Russell W., 1984, "Three Scales to Measure Constructs Related to Materialism: Reliability, Validity, and Relationships to Measures of Happiness," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 11, Thomas Kinnear, Provo (Eds.), UT: Association for Consumer Research, pp. 291-297.
- [4]. BELK Russell W., 1985, "Materialism: Traits Aspects of Living in the Material World," in *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 12, pp. 265-280.
- [5]. BELLAROSE Pamela, 2010, *Between Jobs: A Novel*, First Published by Lulu, 194 p.
- [6]. BURROUGHS James E. and RINDFLEISCH Aric, 2002, "Materialism and Well-Being: A Conflicting Values Perspective," in *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 348-370.
- [7]. FRANZEN Trisha, 1996, *Spinsters and Lesbians*, New York and London: New York University Press, 229 p.
- [8]. HORNBY Albert Sydney, 1989, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, Fourth Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1579 p.
- [9]. KRUTTSCHNITT Candace and GARTNER Rosemary, 2003, "Women's Imprisonment," in *Crime and Justice*, Vol. 30, pp. 1-81.
- [10]. LUTYA Thozama Mandisa, 2012, "Human Trafficking of Young Women and Girls for Sexual Exploitation in South Africa," in Muela Alexander (Ed.), 2012, *Child Abuse and Neglect: A multidimensional Approach*, Croatia: InTech, pp. 87-116.

-
- [11]. NGWAMA Justice Chidi, 2014, "Kidnapping in Nigeria: An Emerging social crime and the Implication for the Labour Market," in *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 133-145.
- [12]. NEUBAUER Inès, 2016, "'I Took My Life in My Own Hands': The Clandestine Business of Prostitution in Bamako," in Rosenthaler Ute and Schulz Dorothea, 2016, *Cultural Entrepreneurship in Africa*, New York: Routledge, pp. 161-180.
- [13]. OGUNDIMU Tunji, 2017, *Mountain of Gold*, Abeokuta: Campus Publication Ltd, 103 p.
- [14]. RINDFLEISCH Aric, BURROUGHS James E., and WONG Nancy, 2009, "The Safety of Objects: Materialism, Existential Insecurity, and Brand Connection," in *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 36, DOI: 10.1086/595718, pp. 1-16.
- [15]. RICHINS Marsha L., 1987, "Media, Materialism, and Human Happiness," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 14, Melanie Wallendorf and Paul Anderson, Provo (Eds.), UT: Association for Consumer Research, pp. 352-356.
- [16]. RICHINS Marsha L. and DAWSON Scott, 1992, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement: Scale Development and Validation," in *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 303-316.
- [17]. SUTHERLAND Gillian, 2015, *In Search of the New Woman*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 187 p.
-